

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Members

The 8 voting members of the **Michigan State Board of Education** are elected at-large on the partisan statewide ballot for 8-year terms. Two are elected every 2 years in the general election. In addition, there are 2 nonvoting, ex officio members — the governor and the state superintendent of public instruction, who is the chair of the board. Any vacancies on the board which occur between elections are filled through appointment by the governor for the remainder of the term.

The state board elects its own officers for 2-year terms. It also selects and appoints the state superintendent of public instruction, who administers the Michigan Department of Education.

The state board of education is at the core of an unusual state education system which seeks to carry out Michigan's long tradition of local control balanced against the overall needs of the people statewide.

Historical Background

The Northwest Ordinance in 1787 encouraged schools and the means of education.

In 1809, nearly 3 decades before statehood, Michigan territorial law directed each judicial district to start schools and collect a tax for them. The **territorial council** made it mandatory in 1829 to divide the townships into school districts and gave the state the right to inspect and supervise schools and to set the length of time each would be open.

Michigan's first constitution, in 1835, created the office of superintendent of public instruction. **John D. Pierce**, a New England clergyman who had come to Michigan as a frontier missionary, was named the first superintendent, becoming the first independent administrator of education under a state constitution in the United States.

Michigan became a state in 1837 and adopted a new constitution in 1850 which formalized the state board of education as a **constitutional body**. The state board of education was created by the Michigan Legislature in 1849 to administer what is now Eastern Michigan University. Many duties were extended to the board over the years, but the current responsibilities were established in the 1963 state constitution.

Constitutional Powers

The state constitution provides:

Leadership and general supervision over all public education, including adult education and instructional programs in state institutions, except as to institutions of higher education granting baccalaureate degrees, is vested in a state board of education. It shall serve as the general planning and coordinating body for all public education, including higher education, and shall advise the legislature as to the financial requirements in connection therewith.

— Constitution of 1963, art. VIII, sec. 3 (in part)

The state board of education exercises its constitutional **duties** of leadership and general supervision over all public education, including adult education and instructional programs in state institutions, except for institutions of higher education granting baccalaureate degrees. It serves as the general planning and coordinating body for all public education and advises the legislature as to the financial requirements for public education.

The state board of education has many direct supervisory duties in connection with local school districts and community colleges and indirect coordinating duties in connection with the 4-year state colleges and universities.

Among their several duties, the state board of education and Department of Education distribute state funds to local school districts; examine and in some cases approve, construction and financial plans of local districts; reimburse schools for certain programs such as school lunches, bus transportation, and remedial and special education; administer federal aid programs; and provide student financial aid. In addition, the state board appoints advisory councils and committees from the education community and general public to investigate, review, or make recommendations.